DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 173 SP 021 961

AUTHOR McEwin, C. Kenneth; Alexander, William M.
TITLE The Status of Middle/Junior High School Teacher Education Programs: A Research Report.
INSTITUTION Appalachian State Univ., Boone, N.C.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Needs; *Junior High Schools; *Middle Schools; *Program Development; Schools of Education; Specialization; *Teacher Certification; Teacher Education; *Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Qualifications

ABSTRACT

Survey responses were received from 538 member institutions of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education on their programs for prospective middle school teachers. Results indicated that teacher preparation programs in this area have not kept pace with the growing numbers of teachers needed, and the predominant emphasis in available programs has been at the undergraduate level. While such programs have become more readily available, the amount of increase is small compared with the growth of middle level schools. A trend was apparent in the growth of programs at the master's level, and in some states requiring middle level certification, teachers were able to combine their graduate work with qualifying for the special certification. The survey also obtained data regarding the nature of programs offered at all levels. Categories included: major specialization, "add on" programs (added to elementary or secondary program), and a series of specialized courses. Included in this report on the survey are tables providing information on available middle school programs and their characteristics. A brief analysis is included on issues and implications identified by the survey and possible solutions to problems involved in establishing specialized training at the middle level. A copy of the survey instrument is included. (JD)

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THE STATUS OF MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A RESEARCH REPORT

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1982

SP 021 961

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by

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Fall, 1982

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Middle/Junior High School Teacher Education Survey
1981-82
FINAL REPORT

Background of the Study

Throughout nearly all of the twentieth century American education has been moving toward inclusion of a third, middle level of schooling between the established elementary and high school levels (Johnson, 1980; Lounsbury & Vars, 1978; Alexander & George, 1981). The latter levels and their programs had become well-defined by 1920, with about four out of every five high school graduates then having gone through an eight-grade elementary school and a four-grade high school (the 8-4 plan). Teacher education was being differentiated as elementary and secondary (high school), although some years had to pass before the separate programs were fully developed. Meanwhile, however, the schools were introducing a middle level that is still not recognized in the majority of teacher education institutions.

The first middle level school was the junior high school, usually grades seven through nine, at first more frequently justified as an earlier beginning of secondary education than as a transitional unit. But the bridging function was increasingly recognized and many junior high schools did attempt to develop unique programs. Buildings and enrollment problems accelerated the growth of the new unit after its introduction in 1910, and by 1960 the organizational situation had been reversed from that in 1920, with about four out of every five high school graduates having gone through a 6-3-3 organization rather than the traditional 8-4 one.

By 1960, however, dissatisfactions with the junior high school were increasing, based mostly on the observation that this unit was too little adapted to the years between childhood and adolescence and too much like the senior high school rather than being a bridge school. These differences in part led to the popularization in the 1960's and thereafter of a new middle level, the middle school. This school, usually including grades five or six through eight, caught on rapidly, with some 5000 such organizations estimated as being in existence today. The latest data available through the National Institute of Education (1980) set the number of separate middle schools as follows: grades five through eight, 1024; grades six through eight, 3070; grades seven through eight, 2623; grades seven through nine, 4004.

The authors' experience working with middle level schools and their faculties has impressed us with the general lack of specific training for teaching at the middle level. It seems that the relatively few junior high school training programs have not been popular, and that teacher certification agencies are only very slowly introducing new programs for middle level preparation. In a survey made by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1981, 41 percent of the principals reported that their teachers had no specific middle level preparation. Of those reporting some preparation, 72 percent indicated that this preparation included inservice training and only 44 percent included university courses (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, and Keefe, 1981). Undoubtedly, most teachers at the middle level were trained for either elementary or high school with any specific middle level training being only brief in-service institutes or workshops.

Such observation by ourselves and others of the lack of preparation for middle level training (and support functions, especially administration and counseling) led the authors to conduct the survey reported herein. This survey was intended to provide, as indeed it does, benchmark data on what the national situation is regarding special teacher education programs for the middle level.

Major Findings

The study, conducted through Appalachian State University, was a survey form sent in November, 1981, to all member institutions of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Of those 774 institutions, 70 percent (538) responded.

Status of Middle Level Teacher Education

The results of this survey clearly demonstrate that teacher preparation programs have not kept pace with the growing numbers of teachers needed for middle level schools. The estimated 12,000 middle level schools must continue to be staffed mostly with teachers and other personnel trained to teach at other levels. Of the 538 institutions responding to the survey, only 162 (30%) reported having any special preparation programs for middle level teachers (see Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Respondents and Number of Special Programs by State

State	With Programs	Total Number of Responses
Alabama	13	17
Alaska	0	0
Arizona	1	3
Arkansas	8	12
California	0	12
Colorado	2	11
Connecticut	1	3
Delaware	0	2
Florida	4	5
Georgia	14	16
Hawaii	0	0
Idaho	1	5
Illinois	2	19
Indiana	14	20
Iowa	3	17
Kansas	5	14
Kentucky	2	9
Louisiana	0	9
Maine	3	8
Maryland	1	9
Massachusetts	5	7
Michigan	6	12
Minnesota	5	18
Mississippi	0	6
Missouri	10	23
Montana	3	3
Nebraska	5	10
Nevada	1	2
New Hampshire	0	2
New Jersey	2	12
New Mexico	0	2
New York	7	23
North Carolina	12	21
North Dakota	1	5
Ohio	7	29
Oklahoma	0	15
Oregon	0	7
Pennsylvania	0	19
Rhode Island	1	3
South Carolina	0	7
South Dakota	1	6
Tennessee	1	15
Texas	1	35
Utah	1	5
Vermont	1	1
Virginia	3	13
Washington	4	9
Washington, D.C.	0	5
West Virginia	11	12
Wisconsin	2	15
Wyoming	1	1
Guam	0	1
Puerto Rico	0	2
Other (No return address)	0	1
Totals	162	538

Of the institutions not having programs, only 16 percent were planning them, with an additional seven percent considering the possibility. Of the institutions reporting special preparation, 101 (62%) were state/city supported and 61 (38%) were private. The lack of special training for the middle level was even more pronounced for principals and counselors. Only 17 percent of the institutions with specialized teacher education programs provided any special training for middle level principals and only nine percent for middle level guidance counselors.

The predominant emphasis in the available programs was at the undergraduate level (see Table 2). However, graduate programs are becoming more popular, especially at the master's level. This trend may reflect a growing demand from teachers now teaching at the middle level who are seeking more appropriate training by pursuing graduate work that focuses on middle level education. In some states requiring middle level certification, teachers are able to combine their graduate work with qualifying for the special certification. This plan is especially appropriate for teachers with undergraduate degrees not closely related to teaching at the middle level. This trend is also being encouraged as accreditation agencies and school districts place pressure on teachers teaching out of field to obtain middle level certification.

Table 2

Special Programs by Degree Levels

Degree levels	Number	Percent*	Percent**
Undergraduate	147	27	89
Masters	72	13	44
Specialist	25	5	15
Doctorate	18	3	11

* Percent of all responding institution

** Percent of institutions with middle level programs

Undergraduate and graduate middle level teacher education programs have become more readily available in recent years. However, the amount of the increase is small when the dramatic growth of middle level schools is considered. In 1973, Gatewood and Mills conducted a similar study that included undergraduate middle level teacher education programs only. Their survey, which yielded a 77 percent return (639 institutions) found that 23 percent of the responding institutions had undergraduate middle level programs. Only five percent more institutions in the 1981-82 survey reported programs than did those in 1973 despite the nationwide growth of middle level schools; no comparable data are available on graduate programs. Although the programs are increasing in number, there are still relatively few available with entire states reporting no such programs (see Table 1). It is particularly disappointing to note that several states known to have large numbers of middle level schools had very few programs, as reported by the respondents.

Some Characteristics of Current Programs

Institutions which are developing teacher education programs for the middle level of schooling may find helpful several items of information the survey collected about the nature of present programs. As noted above, the undergraduate programs predominate in number, but there are many graduate ones, too, among those offered by the responding institutions (see Table 2). Of these, both undergraduate and masters programs are offered by 44 institutions, undergraduate-masters-specialist ones by 18, and all four programs by only five institutions.

The survey also obtained data regarding the nature of programs offered at all levels. The categories included were major specialization; "add on" programs (added to elementary or secondary programs); and a series of specialized courses. Major specialization was clearly the most popular at the undergraduate level (41%), master's level (39%), and specialist level (44%), with a larger percentage of programs consisting of special courses only at the doctoral level (see Table 3). Comparsion of these data with those reported by Gatewood and Mills (1973) indicates that the number of institutions offering major specialization at the middle level had substantially increased by 1982 despite the small gain in the offering of all types of programs.

Table 3
Program Description by Percentage

Program	Undergraduate	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate
Major specialization	41	39	44	28
Add on	28	17	20	28
Special courses	8	11	20	39
Combination	23	33	16	5

Middle level preparation programs were identified in a variety of ways (see Table 4). The majority of programs were identified in some way using the term "middle" (74%), with "intermediate" and "junior high" being used to identify smaller percentages of programs. The term "junior high" was used in just five percent of the titles indicating a decline in the popularity of the term and perhaps the concept itself.

Table 4
Program Identification

Identification	Number	Percent
Middle/junior high school	52	33
Middle school	48	31
Middle grades	15	10
Intermediate	11	7
Junior high school	8	5
Other	22	14

These programs, regardless of identification, were located predominantly in the more traditional departments of elementary and secondary education (see Table 5). In the large majority of institutions, the middle level programs were in departments which by title and program focused on other preparation programs. This may be one of the reasons special middle level programs at times experience difficulty in establishing an identity and attracting large numbers of students. The establishment of independent programs or departments, or at least the renaming of a department to elementary/middle or middle/secondary adds prestige to middle level programs. There is a great need for clear focus on developing and implementing quality preparation programs for middle level personnel.

Table 5
Department Responsible for Program

Department	Number	Percent
Secondary and elementary	72	47
Secondary	26	17
Elementary	39	25
Independent department	5	3
Other	12	8

The enrollment in the majority of preparation programs was relatively low, especially when the number of teachers currently teaching at the middle level is considered. Table 6 contains enrollment figures for the reporting institutions. These enrollment figures clearly indicate that the majority of middle level programs have small enrollments. These enrollments must grow significantly if sufficient numbers of specially trained personnel are to be available for the middle level schools of our nation. This shortage of qualified teachers may grow even more as the general teacher shortages predicted for the 1980's materialize. These predicted shortages may further extend the practice of hiring large numbers of teachers trained to teach at other levels to teach in middle level schools.

Table 6

Program Enrollments by Percentage

Number	Undergraduate	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate
0- 25	53	62	89	83
26- 50	28	12	11	17
51- 75	5	10	0	0
76-100	6	4	0	0
101-125	4	4	0	0
126-150	0	6	0	0
Over 150	4	2	0	0

Program Components as Needed and Offered

A rather complete consensus on what constitutes a quality middle level teacher education program has emerged in recent years. Principals and teacher educators have identified components that are needed in middle level preparation programs. This survey revealed that although no single course or experience was common to all programs, some components considered essential were generally present in some form (see Table 7).

Table 7

Percent of Institutions Offering Selected Courses/Experiences

Courses/Experiences	Undergraduate	Graduate
Field experiences	72	17
Middle level curriculum and instruction	63	44
Reading	63	33
Middle school concept	49	34
Middle level learner	49	33
Academic concentrations		
One	37	17
Two	33	13
Three	5	0
Four or more	1	1
Other	9	9

The authors have observed a number of components as important to successful middle level teacher education, and consider at least four essential. They are: (1) a thorough study of middle level learners; (2) emphasis on middle level curriculum and instruction; (3) at least two areas of academic concentration at the undergraduate level; and (4) early and continuing field experiences at the middle level, preferably in a good middle level school. Without each of these components, any program is severely limited.

A recent comprehensive survey sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1981) supports the importance of

these program elements. Emphasis on the middle level learner, early and continuing field experiences, and middle level curriculum were all rated in the top five teacher education priorities of middle level principals (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, & Keefe, 1981).

Thus, the institutions offering middle level preparation programs are including in them some of the components generally considered essential. The problems are, first, that too few institutions offer any programs, and, second, some programs lack one or more of the essential components.

Some Issues and Implications

Teacher Education and Teacher Certification

Our survey indicated that the existence or lack thereof of special certification for middle level personnel was closely related to the provision of teacher education for this level. Numerous respondents commented that they would develop middle level preparation programs when their states instituted special certification, and/or that they did not have preparation programs because there were no special certification requirements in their states. Of the institutions having middle level teacher preparation programs, 38 percent stated that plans were being made in their states to change certification requirements.

The most recent (1978) survey of state certification for the middle level with which we are familiar, identified 15 states which had special middle school teacher certification with only the state of Kentucky indicating special certification for middle level administrators. This survey also identified 13 states as reporting efforts in the direction of teacher certification, with four states also working toward the development of certification for middle level administrators (Gillan, 1978). Although special certification in all states seems desirable (there are middle level schools in all states) and far from attained, the movement in that direction is clear. As contrasted with Gillan's data just cited, Pumerantz (1969) could identify only two such states in 1968 as having middle level certification, and George, McMillan, Malinka, and Pumerantz only eight such states in 1975. The authors are aware of at least three additional states that have implemented certification since 1978 and several more states have such plans under consideration.

Whether teacher certification or teacher education programs should come first is a moot question. We would like to see them moving together cooperatively so that sound certification requirements are met by and in fact reflect strong preparation programs. Historically teacher educators have had considerable influence in planning certification regulations, and certainly certification programs do cause even reluctant teacher education forces to develop parallel training programs. Surely leaders in middle level education at both school and college levels can help certification agencies, and just as surely these agencies can help encourage and facilitate the development of teacher education programs.

Pre-service vs In-service Preparation

Over the past two decades of the movement toward middle school organization, the now some 5000 newly organized schools have generally had to staff their schools with personnel trained for either elementary or secondary education. Although some programs of preparation for junior high schools were in existence, these usually were in combination with senior high school preparation so as to enable the graduate to get a certificate and a teaching position. Undoubtedly elementary and secondary training programs have helped produce some fine teachers at the middle level, but these persons might have found their beginning years much easier and successful had their preparation included more focus on the middle level student and programs. Furthermore, their own commitment to work at this level might have made their employment more satisfying.

Lacking specifically trained middle level faculties, many school districts have operated various inservice programs to help the former elementary and secondary teachers participate effectively in such typical middle school practices as advisor/advisee plans, team organization and planning, special interest activity programs, basic instruction, and various problems of grouping, discipline, and scheduling. Many members of college and university faculties and many middle level specialists in public school districts have provided extensive consultative and short term training services. Professional and entrepreneurial organizations have operated large numbers of institutes, clinics, and conferences for the same purpose throughout the country. Undoubtedly, many middle level schools are better than they would have been had no such staff development been available. But inservice education of this type at best tends to be *remedial* education all too frequently tolerated as job insurance.

As much as the authors have personally enjoyed their own extensive participation in these inservice training activities, we firmly believe that the true potential of education at the middle level awaits the widespread provision of middle level teachers and support personnel who enter this level with both commitment to and training for middle level careers. Continuing, inservice

education should be built on a solid base of preparation and interest. We believe that a major reason for the turn away from junior high school organization has been the lack of personnel specifically trained for and intersted in working at this level. Will the same problem deny the promise of the middle school?

Developing New Programs

Good models of middle level teacher education programs are available, and the mandate to implement such programs is clear. Guidelines are also available, representing a concensus of opinion as reflected in the literature and from views of practitioners in the field. Progress has been made in some institutions, but it is essential that the move to specialized programs be greatly expanded.

It is also important that teachers, administrators, and other educators responsible for special teaching or support services have at least some special training in working with early adolescents, for example, special educators, physical education teachers, guidance counselors, and principals. For too many years well-meaning educators who know very little about the characteristics and learning needs of early adolescents have been charged with the responsibility of their education and general welfare. All persons certified to work with this age group should be required to at least have taken some basic courses about early adolescence and the implications of the developmental stage for curriculum and instruction. Only when these schools are staffed by personnel knowledgeable about their needs will the middle level school and its students reach their full potential.

In order to attract competent, interested teachers and other personnel for the middle level, middle level teacher preparation programs should be housed in independent departments or other program units which facilitate full concentration on the task of training quality educators for the middle level. This step, along with others discussed, will help teacher education move toward a significant reponsibility that has been largely neglected in the past—that of providing specially trained teachers and other personnel competent in and dedicated to the education of students at the middle level.

Problems and Prospects

Study of the many comments made by the deans and other teacher education officials responding to the survey, underline the existence of serious problems to be solved, critical issues to be resolved, and bright prospects ultimately ahead in teacher education for the middle level.

Perhaps the most serious problem/issue has to do with the need for specialized training at the middle level. Note these two responses representative of those which question the need:

> *If the state mandates a program, we'll have one. My opinion is that pre-service education does not have to be specialized in middle school preparation. Student teaching can now be done in middle school.*
>
> • • • • • • • • • •
>
> *We have elementary 1-8 and secondary 7-12 programs. Elementary certification requires a 21 semester hour area of concentration. We believe our people are prepared to teach in a middle school organization.*

And even if some institutions do organize special programs there is the troublesome problem of interesting prospective students in the middle level program. Note these responses:

> *In 1979 we terminated our program in Junior High Education for lack of enrollment.*
>
> • • • • • • • • • •
>
> *We have had one in the past, but the numbers are too low to continue. We do occasionally arrange for a student to teach at elementary/junior high (3 quarters) and if they have subject requirements out of the way for elementary and secondary, they are in fact prepared to teach middle school.*

One way to increase enrollments is to offer combined elementary/middle and middle/high school preparation; this avoids the non-flexible degree for middle level mentioned by one respondent but may again make a "poor fit" another alluded to:

> *We have run certification programs for endorsements in middle/junior high school and found that unless an elementary (K-6) or secondary (7-12) is combined with it, it can be interpreted as a non-flexible degree.*
>
> • • • • • • • • • •
>
> *The (state education agencies) continue to contribute to the deterioration of the "ideal" middle school concept by attempting to make early adolescent education "fit" into either secondary or the elementary model relative to certification and licensure procedures.*

Yet there are many educators, including those at institutions which have special middle level programs and others at institutions not having them, who share the authors' belief that expansion of middle level preparatory programs is essential to the improvement of American education at all levels, especially the middle level. These comments are representative:

> *There is no question in my mind but that the official and mandatory establishment of a middle grades certificate has made the*

difference in moving the middle school concept ahead. Unfortunately, it seems that only when we "have to" do we stop to realize we "should be" and even we "could have."

****

I hope your research will develop support for middle school specialization.

****

We have a secondary credentialing program that subsumes middle/junior high. We do place some student teachers in a junior high. We also have a field based methodology class that meets several times at a junior high. I agree completely with the contention that there isn't sufficient or adequate preparation for junior high teaching.

Some respondents also described attractive cooperative arrangements for planning and offering middle level programs. Note these examples:

The "middle school people" from most of Michigan's major universities are meeting regularly to coordinate existing programs as well as to plan future efforts. Hopefully, this will lead to something positive.

****

We maintain a "Center for the Improvement of Education in the Middle Grades" and have developed a grades 5-8 school on a partnership basis with the New York Board of Education. We are now setting up a summer partnership with (a New York City district) to develop a "lower school-middle school" model.

And so, what are the prospects for more widespread training programs for the middle level? Despite the fact that only 30 percent of the institutions responding to our survey have such programs, we believe that the leadership of some 12,000 schools at the middle level must and will make their needs for more specially trained teachers known to teacher education departments and colleges. Not to be overlooked is the fact that most of the institutions having programs developed them only recently, with other programs on the planning boards. Middle level leaders and advocates in schools, colleges, and universities, state departments of education, and the general public need to press teacher certification agencies and teacher education officials to work harder and more effectively at the jobs of recruiting, training, and employing competent persons for the middle level. Good models are available, as are many resource persons fully able to help in these programs. The situation can be greatly improved with effort, cooperation, and time.

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MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION SURVEY

Name of Institution: _____ ☐ State ☐ Private

Location: _____

Current Enrollment in Teacher Education _____

1. Does your institution have a special training program for middle and/or junior high school teachers?

Undergraduate	☐ Yes	☐ No	Current Enrollment _____
Masters	☐ Yes	☐ No	Current Enrollment _____
Specialist (6th yr.)	☐ Yes	☐ No	Current Enrollment _____
Doctorate	☐ Yes	☐ No	Current Enrollment _____

2. If no program now, does your institution plan to develop such a program in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. If no program now, please sign on last page and return.

☐ CHECK HERE IF YOU WISH A REPORT OF THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY.

IF YOUR INSTITUTION DOES HAVE A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR MIDDLE AND/OR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS, PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING:

4. How is the program identified? ☐ Middle School ☐ Junior High School ☐ Middle/Junior High School ☐ Intermediate ☐ Middle Grades ☐ Other _____

5. Please check the description below of each program.

Undergraduate		
A Major Specialization	☐ Yes	☐ No
Add On (added to an existing program only)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Special Courses (as a part of another program)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Masters		
A Major Specialization	☐ Yes	☐ No
Add On (added to an existing program only)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Special Courses (as a part of another program)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Specialist (6th year)		
A Major Specialization	☐ Yes	☐ No
Add On (added to an existing program only)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Special Courses (as a part of another program)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Doctorate		
A Major Specialization	☐ Yes	☐ No
Add On (added to an existing program only)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Special Courses (as a part of another program)	☐ Yes	☐ No

6. By what department or departments is/are your program(s) provided? ☐ Independent Department (i.e. middle school education) ☐ Secondary Education ☐ Elementary Education ☐ Other _____

7. Which of the following types of special courses are offered as a part of your program(s)?

	Undergraduate	Graduate
The Middle School (concept, movement)		
The Middle Grades Learner		
Middle Grades Curriculum & Instruction		
Reading (especially for this level)		
Early & Continuing Field Experiences		
Broad Academic Concentration(s)		
One Academic Concentration Required		
Two Academic Concentrations Required		
Three Academic Concentrations Required		
Four or More Academic Concentrations Required		
Other Special Courses:		

8. Is some type of special certificate required in your state for teaching in: ☐ Middle Schools ☐ Junior High Schools ☐ Upper Levels of Elementary Schools ☐ Other Types of Intermediate Schools? Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

9. Are plans being made in your state to change middle grades certification patterns? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, please explain. _____

_____

_____

10. Are plans being made at your institution to modify your program(s) for middle grades teachers in the near future? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

11. Does your institution have special programs or courses for middle/junior high school: ☐ Principals ☐ Counselors ☐ Other Support Personnel? If so, please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

Please attach any materials that would help others understand middle grades teacher education at your institution. Please sign below, and also add any comments you wish to make about middle/junior high school teacher education. Please return this form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

_____ _____

Name and Title of Person Completing Survey Date

COMMENTS: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____